

Buddhism in Practice

the Do's and the Don'ts

Then & Now

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Introduction

The sub-title **the do's and the don'ts** I have chosen for this little booklet **BUDDHISM IN PRACTICE** envisages at least three separate monographs of moderate size in order to be acceptably comprehensive. The words do's and don'ts in my book immediately imply what people should necessarily do on the one hand and should not do on the other if they are honest and sincere followers of my Buddha Gotama. I opt to refer to the Buddha as my Buddha all the time because dozens and dozens, nay scores and scores of people, monks and laymen whom I meet here and abroad, paint for me pictures of the Buddha whom I cannot identify as my Śākyamuni whom I meet quite regularly during my *Dhamma* and *Vinaya* studies.

These two segments of do's and don'ts in this essay include two specific areas. In the first instance are real physical actions of doing like *kāya-kamma* and *vacī-kamma*, i.e. words and deeds, bad aspects, which are stigmatised in Buddhism as *pāpa* and *akusala*. They, like killing and stealing through bodily action are not to be done. Abstinence from them, *veramaṇī*, is deemed a step in the direction of religious culture or *sikkhā-padaṃ* in Buddhism. Failure to abstain

from them, particularly those listed under *pañca-sīla*, is branded as a cause of decline of the human in this very life in the world as boldly declared in the Dhammapada at vv. 245-7. To this may also be added malpractices in the name of Buddhism like prayers and supplications and large-scale offerings addressed to alien divinities and religious personalities which challenge and contradict the spirit of Buddhism, one's own religion.

Under the don'ts, we are also hastened to include from time to time selections from the alarmingly increasing mis-translations of Pali texts into English and Sinhala and the more-than-howler misinterpretations of the Dhamma in the hands of monks and laymen, erudite and less erudite, from all over the world. Please bear with me if the publications do not come out rapidly enough.

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Chapter One

My Master, Buddha Siddhartha Gautama of the Sakyan clan, I guess, in no way anticipated the practice of Buddhism after his demise to lean heavily on the veneration [*vandana + mānana + pūjanā*] of his physical remains like the bone relics [*dhātu*] entombed within *stupas* or arrogantly taken possession of by affluent and elite lay persons, or the worship of associated objects like the Bodhi tree. In this context, I am not reckoning with the legendary number of twenty-four or twenty-eight Buddhas of the distant past.

Instead, he set a higher premium on living in accordance with the *dhamma*

he preached, which amounted to *brahma-cariya-vāso* or living the higher supreme life. The choice of this higher religious life by the devout house-holder, on hearing the teachings of the Master, is expressed as follows: *Sambādho gharāvāso rajo patho. Abbhokāso pabbajjā. Na idaṃ sukaraṃ agāraṃ ajjhāvasatā ekanta-paripuṇṇaṃ ekanta-parisuddaṃ saṅkha-likhitaṃ brahmacariyaṃ carituṃ. Yannūnā'haṃ ... agārasmā anagāriyaṃ pabbajeyyan'ti* at [DN.I.63]. These words mean: 'Household life is full of impediments. It is a dusty path. Life of renunciation is fully open and unobstructed. While living in the household, it is not easy to practice this higher life which is totally pure and totally complete and absolutely untarnished. What if I were to leave the household life and become a recluse?' Nor would the Buddha have expected his followers to be treating him like the living Buddha with daily offerings of food and drinks in royal fashion, as they do even today.

We readily concede that posthumous honoring of the Buddha is indeed approvingly referred to in the Mahāparinibbāna Sutta [DN.II.142] by the Buddha himself as a courteous and respectful gesture on the part of followers, of dutifully remembering the Master, by placing at suitable memorial shrines like *stupas* which embody his bodily remains, items like flowers, and perfumes in his honor. Here it is in his own words: *Cātmahāpathe Tathāgatassa thūpo kātabbo. Tattha ye mālaṃ vā gandhaṃ vā cuṇṇakaṃ vā āropessanti bhivādenti vā cittaṃ vā pasādessanti tesaṃ taṃ bhavissati dīgharattaṃ hitāya sukhāya.* This is what his words mean: "At the cross-roads a *stūpa* should be erected in memory of the Master. Whosoever place there flowers, perfumes or fragrance and show respect and gladden their hearts thereby, such acts will contribute to their weal and welfare".

This would be an honest pledge that those who honor him so are following him as their teacher and guide and meticulously treading the path he indicated. They are not revering him as a savior, seeking their salvation through his graceful intervention.

Nor can the Buddhists hope to put things right here in this life by harnessing anything like a cosmic power associated with the Buddha, like the *nava arahādi budugūṇa* i.e. the nine virtues beginning with *araham*, which is imagined to survive through time and space. These acts are said to generate rewarding religious joy or *saṃvega* in the hearts of those who do so. But it is equally well recorded that such expressions of religious joy and emotion yield only relatively meagre rewards of birth in the heavenly realms: *yesaṃ mayi saddhā-mattaṃ pema-mattaṃ sabbe te sagga-parāyaṇā*. [MN.I.142]. The Pali means 'They who have mere faith and affection towards me, they would all be destined to the heavenly realms'.

On the attainment of his enlightenment or *sambodhi*, the Buddha is said to have realized the staggering contrast between the way of humans of the world, i.e. of their being intensely attached to things of sensory gratification and the way of release propounded by him as surrender, release and detachment therefrom which are expressed by Pali words like *cāgo paṭinissaggo anālayo*. This whole episode is recorded in the Ariyapariyesana Sutta [MN. I. 167] as follows: *Ālaya-rāmā kho panā'yaṃ pajā ālaya-ratā ālaya-sammuditā* = "These people of the world are fond of clinging, are attached to clinging and are gladdened by the very act of clinging". This led to a degree of reluctance on his part to deliver this message to a world which he realized was hardly ready to receive it.

[Please do not be led to believe that the Pali word *ālaya* in this quotation has anything to do with *ālaya vigñāṇa* of later Buddhist schools. Strangely enough, we have discovered that some Sri Lankan scholars, making comparative studies in recent years of Theravada and Mahayana thinking, are found trapped in this confusion.]

This is how our Buddha is said to have expressed his reluctance:

*Kicchena me adhigataṃ halaṃ'dāni pakāsituṃ
rāga-dosa-paretehi nā'yaṃ dhammo susambudho.*

What I have discovered with immense difficulty,
 it is no use delivering to the world now.
 This *dhamma* shall not be easily grasped
 by those steeped deep in greed and hatred.

Translated by the author

However, within three months of his becoming the Fully Enlightened teacher or *Sammā Sambuddha*, he made known to the world, by preaching his Middle Way or *majjhimā paṭipadā* to the Five-fold Ascetics or *Pañca-vaggiyā Bhikkhū*. Its main theme was that an earnest pursuant of the religious goal in Buddhism [i.e. a *pabbajita*] had to avoid the two extremes of austere asceticism [*atta-kilamathānuyoga*] and the pursuing and surrendering of oneself to materialistic sensory stimulation [*kāma-sukhallikānuyoga*]. With this emphasis, there invariably came his well-formulated teaching of the Four Noble Truths or *cattāri ariya saccāni* which contains within it the Noble Eightfold Path or the path to Nirvana which is identified as the Middle Way.

Practice of Buddhism as a way of religious life thereafter came into vogue with the Master making known to the world the truths about the life of man, which he had himself discovered, as well as discovered with tremendous difficulty, i.e. *sayam abhiññāya* and *kiccchena me adhigataṃ*. He was, under no circumstances, a heaven-sent emissary to save humans on earth, as is sometimes believed even by some Theravada traditionalists. They express this idea as *sadevakam tārayanto bhujjhassu amataṃ padaṃ* = "ferrying across the hosts of gods and men, may you realize the blissful state of immortality".

He was indeed a product of human evolution on earth, produced through *Samsāric* culture of numerous births, call it *pāramitā* or whatever you will, as well as spells of trial and error under renowned teachers like Āḷāra Kālāma and Uddaka Rāmaputta. It is a pity to miss the evidence of this in our own textual

references which point in the direction of our Buddha aspirant's pre-enlightenment vision, even as he himself refers to it as *pubbe'va me abhisambodhā anabhisambuddhassa bodhisattass'eva sato etadahosi*. [SN.II.10] = "Even prior to my enlightenment, while I was only a Buddha aspirant and not yet become the Buddha, a thought like this occurred to me".

In propounding his *dhamma*, he consistently maintains that he had only two things to tell the world, namely that there was un-satisfactoriness or *dukkha* embedded within the life process of man from birth to death, and that he had discovered a way of release out of it which in Pali reads as *pubbe c'āhaṃ bhikkhave etarahi ca dukkhañc'eva paññāpemi dukkhassa ca nirodhaṃ* at [MN.I.140].

Dukkha in life which man has to face from birth to death during his life on earth consists in the first instance, of the very first perilous situation of birth itself. But we can never know from a new-born babe how he felt being caged within his dear mother's womb or his fear of the risk he ran in coming out of it. Besides, and viewing it differently, birth is also the starting point, the very genesis from which all other forms of *dukkha* in life follow [*jātiyā sati idaṃ hoti* = there being birth, this comes to be]. The consequent stages of growth and decay [*jarā*] come in the wake of birth, succeeded by disease and death [*vyādhi* and *maraṇa*]. See further [DN.II.57f.] All these are areas of physical *dukkha*. The magnitude of this *dukkha*, according to Buddhism, is intensified by the fact of man's rebirth and *saṃsāric* continuance. Never do forget this or endeavor to forget this basic teaching of Buddhism. At death, one is not delivered into the caring hands of any one. It is from Saṃsāric potential or *bhava* to *jāti* or birth again, that is what is meant by *bhava paccayā jāti*. Nothing less or nothing more.

Sri Lankan Buddhists who are both unable to and/or unwilling to believe this concept of being born again after death are perhaps, counted globally, more than 50%. Those who perpetuate this heresy include both monks and laymen of this country as well as elsewhere who strive to maintain that the theory of Causal

Genesis or *paṭicca-samuppāda* explains no more than the life process of man from birth to death during one single life time. In their intellectual profundity they are seen playing with words like *punar + bhava* in Pali and *punar + uppatti* in Sinhala, not realizing the dimensions of the two words *bhava* and *jāti* within Buddhist teachings.

While this area includes *saṃsāra*-inherited physical *dukkha* [i.e. in being born again and again and its consequences in this life], there is also the other complementary aspect of man-made psychic *dukkha* which have their genesis in man's mal-adjustment in this very life to situations like separation from pleasant ones [in Pali *piyehi vippayoga*] and union with unpleasant ones [in Pali *appiyehi sampayoga*] and of not being able to possess what one longs to obtain [in Pali *yam'pi'cchaṃ na labhati tam'pi dukkham*].

For details of all this. study carefully the Dhamma-cakka-ppavattana Sutta at [SN.V. 420] ff. and [Vin.I. 10] ff. i.e. the Buddha's first sermon to the world, allegedly including the extra-terrestrial beings who are supposed to have heard it from behind the curtain. From one plane to another of their residence, they are said to have applauded on its un-assailability or irreversibility [*appativattiyam* in Pali] on the Sinhala translation of which the Sri Lankan monks and laymen of all grades seem to be bungling. This is how they translate: *appativattiyam* = "which nobody else can do" = in Sinhala "*no pavatviya haki*".

This totality of human *dukkha* is excellently summed up with remarkable philosophical profundity when the Buddha, in his first sermon, the Dhamma-cakka-ppavattana Sutta says that in brief *dukkha* is the outcome of man's being trapped within the imaginary world man creates for himself in terms of his erratic sensory reaction or *upādāna* [*saṅkhittena pañca-upādāna-kkhandhā dukkhā* = "in brief, the five-fold aggregates resulting from grasping are *dukkha*"]. This does not imply any denial of the reality of the external world [*māyā* or whatever]. The external world does really exist, subject necessarily to the law of change and impermanence [i.e. *anicca*]. It is the failure to recognize and the unwillingness to

accept this reality which brings upon man his *dukkha* in the world.

From what we have said so far it becomes thus evident that the basics of the Buddha's thesis had to be

1. The unfailing presence of *dukkha* or un-satisfactoriness in the life process of the human in the world, i.e. while being *lokiya*.
2. The possibility of bringing about a termination [*nirodha*] of it by the human himself by transcending it, i.e. by getting into state which is *lokuttara* or beyond the world.

Thus the synopsis of Buddhism is none other than what is brought out in the statement of the Buddha himself which we have highlighted above: *dukkhañ cev'āhaṃ paññāpemi dukkhassa ca nirodhaṃ*.

This explanation of the phenomenon of life and the possibility of transcendence out of it, without leaning on any tottering props of creation as pre-Buddhist Indians did with their theories of *Brahman* and *Ātman* or *Prajāpati* as well as of an omnipotent and omnipresent God of Creation in Heaven as did the systems of Judeo-Christian thinking in other parts of the world, is brought out in the teachings of the Buddha. In addition to this area of emphasis, there are two other theses which, we believe, have not received adequate attention in the hands of students of Buddhism.

They come to us from the Raṭṭhapāla Sutta of the Majjhima Nikaya [MN.II.68]. They are in a cluster of four highlighted statements or *cattāro dhammuddesā*. The important statement we pick out here is *attāṇo loko anabhissaro*. Its meaning is that "the world we live in is without a place or person to which or to whom we can go for refuge and succour" as well as that "the world has no super power who directs and controls our destiny". Caught up between these two philosophical postulates, the Master's insistence that he is no more than a teacher, an indicator of the way: *akkhātāro tathāgatā* [Dhp.v. 276] and that the

disciples should put in their share of striving [*tumhehi kiccaṃ ātappaṃ*], becomes abundantly clear. This position is further clarified as follows with amazing brilliance in the second half of the verse quoted above.

paṭipannā pamokkhanti jhāyino māra-bandhanā

Dhp. v.276

Those who have entered upon the path
and are meditatively striving,
free themselves from the grip of Death.

Translated by the author

The disciples need necessarily get into the track, i.e. the recommended path to Nirvana [*paṭipannā*] and progress in their culture of body and mind [*jhāyino*] for the attainment of wisdom for release out of the Realm of Death [*māra-bandhanā*].

Now arises the question as to what the Buddhists, as religionists, be striving for in their day to day religious life? In any part of the world, if Buddhists, as they call themselves, are direct inheritors of the teachings of Buddha Gotama of ancient India, and not of other deviant variants of later centuries, their one and only aspiration should be for the termination of their painful *Saṃsāric* journeying, and that in the attainment of Nirvana at the earliest opportunity, and not after spending a shorter or longer holiday in a heavenly world [i.e. *dev minis sepa keḷavara*]. The pursuit of this goal can never be achieved if their lives, at any stage, are plunged into anything below the level of humans.

This means that humans who are truly intent on terminating their *Saṃsāric* continuance can never afford to be degraded into sub-human states called *niraya* or *apāya* like that of animals [*catūh'apāyehi ca vip̐pamutto* [Sn. v.231], i.e. immunized from being degraded in states of decline or *apāya*] which are places of penitential suffering where they go into to pay unavoidably for the evil they have committed [*paṭisaṃvedeti*]. As aspirants of the Nirvanic goal, the approved

patterns of good living they are expected to follow as humans should and would invariably give them *sugati* or blissful human lives [*tato naṃ sukhaṃ anveti* See Dh. v. 1 & 2], birth after birth. They are immunized from being born in those degraded states. This is why morally good ethical living in this very life [*sīla-saṃpanna*] is insisted upon for those who embark on their spiritual journey in the direction Nirvana with an appreciable degree of seriousness [*sīle patitthāya nara sapañño*].[SN.I.13].

Chapter Two

In what we have said so far we have made an endeavor to indicate the Buddhist position of self-help, both with regard to achieving happiness and wellbeing of the human in this life as well as to gaining his final liberation in the attainment of Nirvana. With the words [*attāṇo loko anabhissaro*] which we have already quoted above from the Raṭṭhapāla Sutta, it was adequately emphasized that the humans of the world have to gain the happiness in life which they wish for, and acquire the necessary security to live without danger to their lives by their own effort and enterprise.

Contributing to the furtherance of this among humans, Buddhist teachings insist on moral goodness among humans by bringing about attitudinal changes among them. A regular refrain the Buddhists use for this purpose is in the words of the Metta Sutta which at [Sn. v. 145] endeavors to re-mould human attitudes towards their fellow beings, including the world of animals, saying *sukhino vā khemino hontu sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhittā* = "May all beings be well and happy and may they live in perfect security without any danger to their lives". Humans cannot come to possess these through the intermediary of any external forces, divine or otherwise, before whom they need to kneel in prayer and supplication or make plentiful gifts of food and drink, including the flesh of slaughtered animals. This undeniably has to be the position of the Buddhists, that they shall establish peace on earth and goodwill among men, by their own corrected attitudes to one another.

It has to be determined whether this position is adequately clear to our Buddhists of the early Theravada tradition, no matter in which part of the world they live. But it is becoming more and more evident that they are far flung out of it. They seem to err on two counts. In the first instance they have now created for themselves, with whose connivance and assistance none shall ever know, innumerable sources of protection against all physical disabilities and disasters that come upon them during this perilous short span of life. They do so by supplicating and addressing prayers to hosts of locally generated *devas* and *devatas* to whom they refer as *devi-devatāvun vahanselā*, who are believed to protect humans and their possessions.

With trembling hearts, Sri Lankan Buddhists are also known to manipulate, quite often with the help of their religious clergy, to mitigate the ill effects of planets above, i.e. *graha apala* and *graha dosa*, enlisting as tools the nine-fold virtues of the Buddha or *nava arahādi budu guṇa*. A very well known refrain starts with *arahā budu guṇen mage iruge apala duru vevā* which means "May the ill effects of the Sun be vitiated by the virtue of *arahant* of the Buddha". Hardly an evening *mal pūjā* or *gilanpasa Buddha-pūjā* ever terminate in a Sri Lankan Buddhist temple without this *Navagraha Śānti chanting*, with the monks and the lay community chanting together. Our Theravada Buddhists are also being made to believe in a wide range of talismanic potency, deriving it both from religious and demonic sources.

In this search for external aid, both for prevention in advance and for cure when struck with all manner of diseases which affect human bodies of flesh and blood, the chief advisers are the astrological consultants who prove themselves right all the time. Our Buddhists then rush immediately to their monks and commission them with confidence to perform various supplicatory rituals like *Bodhi-pūjā* from wherever they are. They are capable of performing them at global levels, across continents and over high seas. Our Buddhists, on their part, complacently forget the very down to earth words of their own master who has

convincingly declared the possibility that bodies of humans are exposed to all manner of diseases [*roga-nidḍaṃ* = a nesting place for diseases].

It is also equally well declared that human bodies are liable to break up and perish on getting involved in accidents, whether on the highways or even in one's homes [*pabhaṅguraṃ* = liable to break up]. It needs only a reasonable degree of sanity or common sense, both to immunize oneself against infectious diseases or to avert accidents. One only needs to move about wherever one goes with greater care. What will talismans like *Sīvali-yantarās* and protective chants like *Jalanandanās* do, through their thousand-times chanting, to be adequately protective against such calamities? It is equally true, both positively and negatively that man is, for the most part, the generative source of all his achievements, both in success and in failure in human life.

Now it is for the Buddhists to learn, and if they have already learnt, to remember, that the humans of the world [nay while they have not yet come out into it and are still in their mother's womb] commence life with a dual composition of the physical and the psychic, i.e. the physical component of flesh and blood [*nāma + rūpa* = zygote] contributed by one's parents in the form of sperm and ova [*mātā-ṭṭika-sambhavo* DN.I.76] and one's own psychic constituent called *viññāṇa* which comes from outside into the mother, i.e. into the womb proper to unite with the *nāma-rūpa* [DN.II.63].

But this *nāma-rūpa* or the zygote, in its journey to the womb, may calamitously get lodged in the Fallopian tube and perish within a very short duration of time. In the case of a grown up human living in the world, now out of the mother's womb, one speaks of his physical reality as a conjoint physical and psychic totality, i.e. the *rūpī kāya* and the *viññāṇa* which totals up to what is referred to as the *pañcakkhandha* or the living reality of the human individual. This incoming *viññāṇa* is one's own distinctly individual *Samāsāric* Consciousness [DN.II.63]. This is what goes under the names *Samvattanika Viññāṇa* [MN.II.262] and *Viññāṇa-sota* [DN.III.105].

These two, *viññāṇa* and *nāma+rūpa*, within the mother's womb or *mātu-kucchi*, together bring about the genesis of human life, resulting in the commencement and gradual growth of sense organs and their resultant cognitive powers. The process is recorded at [DN.II. 56 f]. as being *viññāṇa-paccayā nāma-rūpaṃ nāma-rupa-paccayā saḷāyatanaṃ saḷāyatana-paccayā phasso phassa-paccayā vedanā ...* meaning `Consciousness gets Name and Form into action, Name and form begets six Sense organs, Sense organs beget Contact, Contact begets Sensations ...]. All this come to you with great clarity in the Mahānidāna Sutta of the Dīgha Nikāya at [DN.II.55 ff.] There is hardly any doubt about the reliability of these as authentic *dhamma* texts].

Thus it should become clear why the Buddhist has to look upon his own individual self as the sole architect of his or her own fortunes, to make or mar them. This clarifies as to what the determinants of human happiness or their opposites truly are. For the Buddhists to imagine that external forces out in the universe like planets in the sky [*nava-graha*] or sub-human demonic beings like *yakṣas*, and departed spirits or *pretas* can maliciously bring disasters like diseases and ruinous accidents upon humans appears to us as far from being Buddhistic, i.e. not being within the religious framework of a system which repeatedly keeps questioning `what will the stars do' [*kiṃ karissanti tāraḳā*] [J I 257ff]] pertaining to an incident which is referred to as a foolish habit of consulting stars. [See Dictionary of Pali and Proper Names Vol II p 5]

Propitiatory chants, like the *nava-graha-sānti*, which are being chanted by Sri Lankan Buddhist monks all over the world today, to lull and pacify their well-wishing patrons who look after them, appear to us preposterous. Buddha's transcendental virtues like *arahaṃ* are being used to vitiate the ill effects of planets into whose grouping, we discover, diverse celestial bodies, including even the sun and moon [*iru* and *sandu*] are added: *arahaṃ budugunēn mage iruge apala duruvevā* etc. etc. The virtues of the Buddha, Dhamma and the Sangha, as far as we understand, are placed before us for a different purpose of

enhancing our adoration of the *ti-saraṇa* and bonding our relations with them as our infallible guides in our religious and social lives.

We discover yet others who, in recent years, have begun to use these virtues of the Buddha like *arahaṃ* as tools even for wishing well to others. This strangely, is their *modus operandi* of developing *mettā-bhāvanā* through good wishes, not unlike well-wishing with 'Happy birth day to you' at a birth-day party gathering. To us, this appears no more than picking the pocket of one to practice charity towards another. *Mettā-bhāvanā* is no more and no less than changing one's attitude towards others, from one of dislike and hatred to one of love and friendliness. Note *mettaṃ bhāvayato Rāhula yo vyāpādo so pahīyissati* at [MN.I.424] in the Mahā Rāhulovāda Sutta which means "As one develops *mettā*, O Rahula, whatever ill-will there is within, it disappears".

Vyāpāda or the sense of hostility of one to another, it must be remembered, is the second item of erratic thinking which needs to be corrected under *sammā sarikkappa*, i.e. stage no. 2 on the Eightfold Path. It marks an early stage of preparatory culture on the way to Nirvana via the Eightfold Path. *Mettā* must result in the reduction and elimination of disastrous egoistic escalation or self-glorification within oneself which prolongs one's *Saṃsāric* continuance.

Here is yet another instance of the Sri Lankan Buddhists unjustifiably leaning on a self-generated external power for self-protection and self-escalation. A talismanic protective medium by the name of *Sīvalī-yantraya* is now becoming tremendously popular in the market place in Sri Lanka, day by day. It is a protective talisman of very high potency. Greater the number of times, thousands over thousands, these have been chanted over with a particular *mantra* or *sūtra*, as indicated in the advertisements, higher their value and greater their effectiveness. And higher their prices too.

Sīvali as a reputed Buddhist disciple is a character generated and upgraded in the Apadāna Pali of Buddhist texts of the Khuddaka Nikaya. Apadāna Pali has

the notoriety of being clustered together with the Buddhavaṃsa and the Cariyāpiṭaka. These three, added to the Khuddaka Nikaya at the tail end as nos. 13, 14 and 15 have been firmly rejected by the Dīgha Bhāṇaka monks of Sri Lanka as being unacceptable within the Sutta Piṭaka. In a study of the history of Buddhist thought and practices in Sri Lanka, these hard facts about literary stratification are not to be forgotten by our learned or less learned writers on Sri Lankan Buddhism.

We know for certain that Sīvali as a Buddhist disciple [even as an *arahant*] did not wield an all-protective magic wand as he is made to do now. Even the Apadāna tradition is that he was a great recipient [*lābhi*] of plentiful food and drinks from lay devotees [and even *devas*] because he had made great gifts of these in his previous lives. This interpretation accords fully well with the *kamma-sarikkhatā* theory of Apadāna [i.e. a theory of identity between action [*kamma*] and its fruit [*vipāka*], both for good and bad. Even the Buddha is made to feel a sense of security about food during his travels, on account of Sīvali's presence in their company.

On account this aspect of his character, Sri Lankan Buddhists have made him an unfailing supplier of food to the Buddhist homes by having in their homes a picture of Sīvali, in the position of having a sumptuous meal, with his hand in a bowl full of rice. How would my *arahant* feel, being made to sit continuously like that throughout day and night. Furthermore, Buddhist monks of great learning do still go about today distributing pictures of this saint and seriously advising their lay patrons that the picture of Sīvalī should face the interior of the house into which the food should come and not face the outside of the house which would benefit only the passers-by, outside on the road.

Among Sri Lankan Buddhists today, wherever they live, Sivali is also made an all powerful saint who, not only guarantees an unfailing supply of food to the houses of his devotees but also brings home to them all manner of success they pray for and have all their wishes and ambitions fulfilled. Hardly a Buddhist home

today, old or new, is complete without a colorfully finished porcelain plaque adorning their sitting room, depicting a meal-time Sivali, with the all-success-conferring [= *sabba-siddhī*] prayer associated with him inscribed right round him. Here is the wording on the plaque. This is one of the latest additions to Sri Lankan Buddhist prayers and supplications, introduced by the enterprising business world.

Namām'ahaṃ mahālābhiṃ

Sīvalī nāma arahantaṃ

Tassa tejena

Sabba siddhi bhavantu te.

My adoration to Arahant Sīvali

One of Great Majesty.

By his power

May all success be yours.

Translated by the author

Have you by any chance with you today a yard-stick with which to measure the propriety or otherwise of these prayers and supplications we make as believed-to-be self-reliant, Nirvana seeking Buddhists?

It would be extremely unfair if, at this stage, we fail to mention how in Thailand, yet another Buddhist country, Buddhists look upon this same Arhant Sīvalī in great esteem. According to stories in Buddhist history, Arhant Sīvalī holds a prestigious position as one who receives, without any effort on his part, all requisites of a Buddhist monk like food, places of residence, wearing apparel and medicinal requirements. For this reason, as we have already indicated above, he came to be called a *labhī*, i.e. a recipient. Unlike our Sri Lankan Sīvali who has been converted to be a saint who can ceaselessly procure food for the lay community who seek his assistance, even though quite un-obtrusively, Thais look upon him as a symbol of contentment, frugality and abstemiousness.

In a wide range of statuary, the Thais portray him as a freely wandering carefree monk who is totally unmindful of his day to day needs, whatever they be. With a begging bowl strapped in a carrier bag hanging from his shoulder, and holding in one hand a rolled up umbrella which rests over his shoulder, and himself supported by a walking stick, *Arhant Sīvalī* of Thailand is a dignified symbol of true *nekkhamma* or renunciation. Our deep veneration to him for being so in the eyes of the Buddhists of that country. Unlike in Sri Lanka, he wields no magic wand in Thailand, to bring success and prosperity to all and sundry mysteriously, unmindful of the way they live as followers of the religion.

Examining further, here are some more don'ts of contemporary Buddhism in Sri Lanka. A very glaring one, and a very stupid and shameful one at that, is the misuse of the *Āṅgulimāla Sutta* [MN.II.103] by the Buddhists of Sri Lanka, both monks and laymen, in the care of pregnant women. The original use of this, dating back to the time of the Buddha, is what the Buddha himself is said to have told the newly ordained *Āṅgulimāla* who was an erstwhile criminal, that he could bring security and comfort to a pregnant woman who was reported to be suffering serious discomfort on account of her pregnancy. *Āṅgulimāla* was not an *arahant* at the time. But on account of the degree of moral goodness he had reached since becoming an *ariyan*, i.e. a religiously dignified disciple under the Buddha, and in his own words in Pali *yato'haṃ bhagini ariyāya jātiyā jāto*, and that he had never knowingly destroyed the life of any living thing and that again in Pali *sañcicca pāṇaṃ jīvitā voropetā*, that he could therefore make an asseveration or *sacci-kiriya* and wish comfort and security both to the pregnant woman who was in pain and to her child in the womb, saying *sotthi te hotu sotthi gabbhassa =* May you be well and comfortable and your child too within the womb.

This act which *Āṅgulimāla* was called upon to do, and we fully believe by the Buddha himself, was one of very high grade magnanimity and benevolence. *Āṅgulimāla*'s words thus are not to be taken as a baby delivery chant. Far from it. This vibrantly dynamic original chant which we reproduce below, of no more than

eighteen words, inspires confidence and builds up adequate psychic strength in the pregnant woman for the biological process of delivering her baby in due course. Today we know and hear from the world of medical science, of induced processes of painless child-birth, not very different to this act of Aṅgulimāla. Here is the original chant:

*Yato'haṃ bhagini ariyāta jātiā jāo
nābhijānāmi saṃcicca pāṇaṃ jīvitā voropetā.
Tena saccena sotthi te hotu
sotthi gabbhassa.*

MN.II.103

O sister, ever since I became an ariyan disciple,
I know not having consciously destroyed any life.
By the truth of this may you,
and the unborn baby within you be well and happy.

Translated by the author

But within centuries after the first incident, this dignified utilization of acts of religious co-operation in affairs of the lay community appears to have descended to a very low level of rustic and vulgar modification. We are using the words vulgar and rustic here in the sense of being associated with the common people. Today we discover an introductory verse, much longer than the original *paritta*, added to our Aṅgulimāla Sutta. This admittedly goes back more than a thousand five hundred years. Prefacing the older *paritta*, it adds some ridiculously offensive strange ideas which appear to us as being completely incompatible with and offensive to the original motivation. It speaks at a very low vulgar level of washing the seat on which the monk who chants the Aṅgulimāla-paritta sits and using the water there of to effect an easy delivery of the unborn baby. Here is what they say in Pali.

Parittaṃ yaṃ bhaṇantassa nisinnaṭṭhāna-dhovanaṃ

*udakam'pi vināseti sabbam eva parissayaṃ
soṭṭhinā gabbha-vuṭṭhānaṃ tañca sādheti taṃ khaṇe
therassa Aṅgulimālassa lokāthena bhāsitaṃ
kappaṭṭhāyi-mahātejaṃ parittaṃ taṃ bhaṇāmahe.*

The water with which one has washed the chair on which the paritta-reciter sits shall dispel all risks, dangers and troubles to which the pregnant woman is exposed. At that very moment, she will have a safe and easy delivery. I shall now chant that paritta of great potency which was delivered to Angulimala by the Buddha whose effect will last a whole aeon.

Translated by the author

Sri Lankan monks of today invariably chant this spurious verse too when they invoke blessings on a pregnant mother. Are they conscious and aware of what they do? Much worse. A Buddhist father would come to a temple today, both in the village and the town, and request the monk there to charge a young king coconut [*tambill*] with the chant of the Aṅgulimala *paritta*, take it home and give the water thereof to his pregnant daughter to drink, assuring her that she would have an easy delivery of her child. It works, both parties believe equally well.

Still more stupefying. While residing in France or England some years ago, we remember seeing in one of the Sri Lankan Buddhist temples a printed Paritta Book in Sinhala which carried the instructions to chant some water with the Angulimala *paritta* and apply that water on the abdomen of the pregnant woman for easy delivery of the child. We leave it to the Sri Lankans of today, monks and laymen, no matter where they live, to put these Buddhist practices, according to their judgement, under do's or don'ts. The future of Buddhism is in your hands.

We have indicated to you so far several instances where Sri Lankan Buddhists, overwhelmed by their miserable sense of helplessness, live in fear

and dread [i.e. lamenting over the absence in Buddhism of an all-powerful supreme divinity before whom they can submissively kneel and pray]. Besides this yearning for personal security, there is also an insatiable thirst for power, position, prestige and possessions in their own lives. This has led both to discover and create for themselves, hosts of divinities and other supernatural powers for this purpose, even from among those born as humans. They even elevate personalities of down to earth origin, from here and elsewhere, to divine positions as *avatars* of heavenly descent. This has happened and does happen even now, more often than not, even under the guidance of their own religious clergy.

Now over to yet another area. Sri Lankan Buddhists also are now seen to be developing, day by day, suspicious unhealthy relations with their dead, and this, sad to say, under the direction or more precisely under the misdirection of their own venerated clergy. They doubt quite often whether their dead, from wherever they are, can in moments of displeasure, do any form of harm to the living. New brands of Buddhist clergy in Sri Lanka seem to be spreading the dreadful idea that if the dead come to their original homes, specially to receive merit at the seventh-day alms-giving, as they did almost up to the other day, would opt to stay back in their original homes without returning to where they rightly belong as *pretas*. The living relatives are warned by these neo-pundits that these stay-back-dead would cause the living immense trouble.

Buddhists of Sri Lanka today are now being weaned from giving merit to the dead within the homes in which they used to live. The living are called upon to carry their *dāna* offerings on behalf the dead to the temples where the monks live and deliver them there and the consequently-acquired-merit be remitted to the departed spirits from there itself, without there being any re-introduction of the dead to the abodes of the living. Time-place relationships of these different planes of existence like the living and the dead are relevant to the Buddhist only to the extent that the living can relieve the suffering of the dead who are in a

state of woe like the *pretas* who are referred to as being totally dependent on the living for their supply of food and clothing [*para-datta-upajivi*].

The world of *pretas* knows of no modes of making a living like agriculture or cattle rearing, in Pali *na hi tattha kasī atthi gorakkh'ettha na vijjati*. They must necessarily subsist on what is given by the living ones of the human world, i.e. *ito dinnena yāpenti petā kāla-katā tahiṃ*. This transmission is made possible only by making gifts of what the *pretas* need, i.e. food and clothing, to the *saṅgha* and transfer the consequent merit there of [i.e. *dakkhiṇā*] to the departed relatives who are in a deprived state of want regarding food and clothing [*petānaṃ dakkhiṇaṃ dajjā*]. But nothing from hand to hand, food or clothing, as the *pretas* are made to tell us [*hatthena hatthe te dinnam na mayham upakappati*]. Food and clothing can be made available to the *pretas* only by gifting them to the Saṅgha and forwarding the credit thereof to the dead.

But an ugly perversion has crept into this once aesthetically acceptable religious ritual of benefiting the dead with regard to their much needed food and clothing. The serious question here, in the hands of any sophisticated modernist should not be whether this quota of merit would or could be correctly delivered to the dead at the other end. Better view it sensibly as a fruitful religious ritual of multiple benefit. In the first instance:

- i. One is made to look upon one's departed relatives or friends with respect, gratitude and appreciation. In any culture, ancient or modern, this would be deemed admirable.
- ii. The transmission is not made in a rustic village way, sending food over the grave to the dead person lying below, as it is done even today by primitive tribes in many parts of the world. The meaningful Buddhist ritual described above [meaningful at least to any sensible Buddhist as such], can be practiced in any part of the world without embarrassment to any one.

In Sri Lanka, this perversion is seen raising its ugly head now and again in

this scandalous fashion, even in the midst of urban elite who know not the serenity of their Buddhist culture. Its origin, we do not know how far it goes back. Even today, this vulgarized version is being backed and supported by all manner of writers on Buddhism, qualified and less qualified to speak on the subject. This is how it is done. On the seventh day after the death, all manner of food and drinks enjoyed by the dead person while he was living, including his own brand of alcohol if he did use any, are collected together on a tray and placed in a quiet room in the house or on a specially prepared palm-leaf rack outside the gate. The master or mistress of the house then stands in front of this food offering and utters the following Pali stanza in a very pleading and submissive voice, requesting the dead person to partake of it, saying:

*Gandhaṃ dhūpañ ca dīpañ ca
pāṇīyaṃ bhojanam'pi ca
paṭigaṇhantu santuṭṭhā
ñāti-petā idhā'gatā.*

May our dead relatives who are assembled here
joyously accept these offerings of fragrant perfumes,
lights, as well as food and drinks.

Translated by the author

This request to the dead to partake of the hand-delivered food and drinks is made in Pali, the ancient language of Buddhism. This immediately drives us to link its origin with the monastic community, we would not be sure whether of Sri Lanka or elsewhere, both in terms of their competence in the language to compose such a verse as well as in initiating such a new move which completely contradicts the early spirit of the religion which totally rejects the hand-delivery of food and clothing from the plane of the humans to the realm of the *pretas*: It is emphatically stated by the *pretas* that what is delivered by hand to hand does not reach them. This is how it is expressed in Pali: *hatthena hatthe te dinnaṃ na*

mayham upakappati.

This rot in the Buddhist ritual practices relating to the dead which we have repeatedly pointed out many a time, may have begun as a result of the willingness of the Sri Lankan Buddhist monastic community and many others among the laity to tie up with indigenous cults of the dead. Feeding the dead is indeed a very primitive practice which humans have resorted to all over the world from times unknown. A primary reason for this is the need to keep them from being hostile to the living on account of their alleged misery of hunger and thirst [*khuppipāsa*]. It would be natural, primitive though it may seem, to believe that the dead would invade the territories of the living in search of relief.

The early Buddhist practice seems to have been to utilize the Buddhist *Saṅgha* as a banking community via whom remittances could be made to the dead, under the label *dakkhiṇā*, a meritorious power arising out of gifts of food made to the Sangha: *petānaṃ dakkhiṇaṃ dajjā*. This word is also used with reference to merit gathered to be offered to *devatā* as at [DN.II.88] which reads as: *sīlavant'ettha bhojetvā tāsāṃ dakkhiṇaṃ ādise...* which means "Having fed the pious monks, let them transfer the merit thereof, i.e. the *dakkhiṇā* to the divinities".

Therefore it is the Sangha themselves who must now come forward to enlighten the lay community and totally eliminate the crude rustic practice of direct food offerings to the dead by the living. Here is the vital need for a Buddhist SLS, a bureau of standards, to correct these degrading practices within Buddhism, no matter when and where they had their origin or in whose prestigious hands. Their total elimination is the need of the day, no matter who is thrown out of billet.

Chapter Three

Under the concept of don'ts in Buddhism, we have indicated so far a few disastrous malpractices which have crept into Buddhism on account of erroneous

beliefs and fanciful thinking, on the part of both monks and self-appointed wise men of the lay community. Through time, they have found their way into the corpus of the religion. These are due partly to the incorrect and inadequate learning of the *dhamma* by the custodians who unfortunately take to other professional activities today, to the utter neglect of their own craft and to the dismay of the people who look up to them for guidance.

It is also partly through the pressure of the lower religious cultures of the land which are patronized by other professional groups like astrologers, medicine men and demonic practitioners. This process of mixing up and blending is labeled as assimilation and is presented by some modern-day students of various disciplines as a harmless process in the cultural growth of mankind. But as far as our knowledge of the *dhamma* and our Buddhist sensitivity go, we have very little room in our Buddhist thinking and our Buddhist practices to entertain mules who could be used only as beasts of burden in our midst.

We beg to disagree. Buddhism has avowedly declared that it does not move with the tide, nor with time. It is a teaching for all times [*akālika*], with a universal applicability. In Buddhism there is no external power of a savior who helps people out of their worldly ills. Nor have they any *nem-but* chanting, imported into our country today from Far Eastern countries by our own native men and women, which are believed to upgrade one's social life here, generating neo-rich in our midst. The goal of the Buddhists is a transcendental attainment and for that reason their ethics and their conduct in life do not entertain any possibility, at any stage, of adopting and assimilating novel practices or changes from anywhere which do not conform to our fundamental aspirations.

Emergence of new groups within the Buddhist clergy who nowadays import to Sri Lankan Buddhism fancifully strange ideas from abroad, does not justify the adoption of new ways of religious practices, if in any way they show any deviation from or contradiction of the original aspirations. All such changes, both in theory and in practice, will necessarily come in the category of what we wish to

include under the don'ts in this essay.

Now let us turn to what we propose to indicate under do's. They necessarily emerge from the basics or the fundamental teachings of the Buddha, i.e. what he delivered to the world under *dhamma* and none other. These alone have to guide and direct the followers of the faith to their aspired religious goal, i.e. the termination in Nirvana of the painful process of *Saṃsāric* continuance. This can be achieved only by taking the Buddha as our one and only guide or *saraṇa*, i.e. by solemnly declaring, not once, but three times, *dutiyam'pi tatiyamp'pi Buddhamaṃ saraṇamaṃ gacchāmi* = I take refuge in the Buddha for a second and a third time. This has to be an honest avowal of faith in the Buddha as our only guide throughout our entire spiritual journey. It has to be an utterance with awareness and conviction. This is a do of the very first grade in Buddhism.

First and foremost, it has to be remembered that our spiritual quest in life in search of the transcendental goal has to be firmly founded on the *terra firma* of our human life here, caged within a very limited life span, between our birth and our unpredictable death. One has to be very mindful about it as though one's head was on fire: *appam'āyu manussānaṃ hīleyya naṃ suporiso careyya ādittasīso'va* = Short indeed is the life-span of man. Let a diligent man take adequate heed of it. He should go about in life as if his head were ablaze. [SN.I.108]. Life of man has to be lived justifiably well here, that is being a *dhamma*-liver or *dhamma-cārī* for successful continuance in the direction of Nirvana, within one life here or during many more to come, without being plunged in degraded states called *apāya* and *niraya*: *na duggatiṃ gacchati dhamma-cārī* = a *dhamma*-liver never goes into a degraded state, after death.

For the fulfillment of needs in our day to day life here, of whatever sort they may be, humans have to work on a different plane, but still within a specific perimeter, i.e. within a *dhamma* perimeter, mindful of the here and the hereafter, i.e. unmistakably of a life after death: *bhava-paccayā jāti*. It is, as it were, through the sweat of one's brow [*sedāvakkhittehi*] and the strength of one's muscle

[*bāhābala-paricīteh*] that one can and should justifiably earn one's daily bread: *dhammikehi dhamma-laddhehi bhogehi* = with righteously acquired wealth. [All these references are from [AN.III.76]]. Nobody ever gives us anything for a mere asking.

Neither while living his life of forty-five years after his enlightenment, i.e. throughout the entire period of preaching his *dhamma* to the world, nor with reference to anything after his demise, did the Buddha ever speak of any Buddha-power [*Buddha + ānubhāva*], surviving him after his demise in any cosmic or other form, through which people of the world could acquire for themselves things of the world they wish for, such as good health, plentiful wealth or wisdom.

So we are led to assert that a primary must, i.e. a real do for the Buddhist is the trust in which he must hold the Buddha as the one and only guide who infallibly indicates the way to one's final liberation in Nirvana as goes the statement *akkhātāro tathāgatā*. This means 'Buddhas only indicate the way' as at [Dhp. v. 276], stressing at the same time *tumhehi kiccaṃ ātappaṃ* that 'Each individual must himself personally strive for his liberation'. Utilize the Buddha only for what he stands for. The Buddha is only our *saraṇa* or source of guidance for the achievement of that end and also that he alone, and none other, could be our *saraṇa* for that. Mark these words well.

Your personal health, and your material prosperity and a greater part of the consequent happiness you enjoy in this life are partly your *karmic* inheritance from the goodness of your previous lives. This is very specific under the statement *yathā-kammūpage satte* which means 'beings born according to their own *kamma*'. The wherewithal with which one enjoys life in this world is also a product of what one acquires through one's energetic striving or in other words: *uṭṭhāna-viriyā-adhigata-dhana* etc. as at [AN.III.77].

On the other hand, one's personal security while one lives in the world into

which one is born and one's personal health are very much the products of one's own handling, the care and caution with which one lives both as an individual as well as a member of the human community. A vast stock of instructions covering this immense territory of human existence in this very life is precisely spelt out in Suttas like the Maṅgala, Metta, Vasala, Parābhava, Veludvāra, Sāleyyaka, and Singālovāda.

Next comes, and with the same emphasis, the *dhamma*, as a primary source towards which one must necessarily turn for spiritual guidance: *dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi*. But how and why? With the demise of the Buddha at the age of eighty, the personal guide who was available to mankind disappeared from the scene. He has totally disappeared from the world and for ever. The *dhamma* he had taught for the benefit of mankind as a whole and the *vinaya* he had propounded by then for the guidance of the lives of the monks were nominated by the Buddha himself into their rightful place to step in to fill the vacancy thus created. Thus he says at [DN.II.154]: *Yo vo Ānanda mayā dhammo ca vinayo ca desito paññatto so vo mam'accayena satthā*. It means: O Ananda, whatever Dhamma I have preached and whatever Vinaya I have propounded, they shall be your Master after my demise.

The Buddha further consolidated at [SN. III.120] the position and the role of his teachings by identifying the teaching with the master and the master with the teaching: *Yo kho Vakkhali dhammaṃ passati so maṃ passati yo maṃ passati so dhammaṃ passati*. The Pali here means: O Vakkhali, he who sees the *dhamma* sees me and he who sees me sees the *dhamma*.

It is for this vital role of guiding the followers to the goal of Nirvana that the *dhamma* came to be called *opanayiko* or leading up to the goal. At this juncture, that is after the demise of the Master, the *dhamma* alone seems to be called upon to play this role of guide to Nirvana. The *dhamma* has to put the followers on the track for their final liberation out of the painful process of *Samāsāric* continuance. The Buddha had visualized it to be so all the time and insisted that

his followers should look up to the *dhamma* as their guide and their impersonal source of power: *so vo mam'accayena satthā* = On my demise, the *dhamma* shall be your guide. Even while he was living, the living Buddha insisted that *dhamma* alone had to be their guide and source of inspiration: *dhamma-dīpā bhikkhave viharatha dhamma-saraṇā anañña-saraṇā*. [DN.II.100].

But with the emergence in later years of iconic representation of the Buddha in human form, and perhaps also with the Mahāyāna idea of an eternally existent Buddhahood or Buddha [as in *Dharma-kāya*], the desire to treat the Buddha as living amongst us, even after his *parinirvāṇa*, seems to have come to the fore and the *dhamma* apparently had to recede to the background. Daily offerings of food to the Buddha has now become a regular practice, accompanied even with medicaments, including all manner of medicinal items like ginger, coriander etc. in packs [*gilāna-paccaya-bhesajja-parikkhāra*]. Sri Lankan Buddhists have not forgotten even their grand chew of betel leaves [*tāmbūla dāna*]. They offer it, enticing the Buddha with a market-place chant that betel-chewing makes the mouth fragrant, gives the mouth a delightful flavor, and eliminates diseases of windy complaints. Here it is.

*Mukha-vāsakaraṃ kāmaṃ
tāmbūlaṃ tuṭṭhi-dāyinaṃ
vātādi-rogharaṇaṃ...*

If the meaning of these *vandanā-gāthā* or prayer-time chants which the priest of the temple makes you repeat after him are known, would you not believe that either the Buddha would walk out of the shrine room or you would run away in shame. These carefully planned *Buddha-pūjas*, i.e. offerings to the Buddha of material things like food and drinks etc. have necessarily to shut out the *dhamma* and the *sarīra* as objects of veneration because they are not recipients of such material gifts. But we believe it is the veneration of the *ti-saraṇa* or the trinity as a coherent unit which alone consolidates the religiousness of the Buddhist and not

the acceptance by the Buddha of our food offerings.

The *ti-saraṇa* have to be respectfully admitted into our lives all the time, to serve as an efficient source of inspiration and unfailing guidance for the sole purpose of working out our liberation out of the perils of *Saṃsāra*. Are Theravada Buddhists convincingly aware of this or even made aware of this? The contents of the *dhamma* which we venerate, describing it as 'in this very life, not restricted to any period of time. with an attitude of come and behold and leading up to the goal': *sandiṭṭhiko akāliko ehipassiko opanayiko ...* at [MN.I. 37] have to remind us all the time of the closeness with which we must associate the *dhamma*. It has to be a living process, much more than keeping Buddha relics sealed up in gold caskets as family heirlooms, believing that these relics stay on, bestowing fortunes on us, or quit and go elsewhere as they choose in search of better hosts and hostesses, depending on the degree of veneration they receive in the hands of the custodians.

Now over to the *Saṅgha* as the third item of what might be called the Buddhist trinity or *ti-saraṇa*. When we venerate the Saṅgha and show our respect to them, with unquestionable loyalty, we hold before us none other than the institution of perfect *saṅgha* [*supaṭipanno bhagavato sāvaka-saṅgho ...* Ibid.], the symbol of renunciation. It is they whom we wish, in turn, to emulate. This provides for us adequate proof that we ourselves, in following the path indicated by the Buddha, shall terminate our ills of *Saṃsāra* in reaching the goal of Nirvana. The use of this veneration chant on any and every monk one encounters at every turn, even on questionable characters, we think is seriously objectionable.

If one goes through this acceptance and avowal of faith in the *ti-saraṇa*, it is more than a task well begun. And consequently, the job of becoming a Buddhist and being a good Buddhist with a serious sense of dedication to his mission thereafter is more than half done. This completion of the preliminary initiation via the *ti-saraṇa*, we maintain, should be clearly intimated to the lay community by

the officiating monks. We know some of them do this formally, by announcing to the laymen: *tisaraṇa-gamaṇaṃ sampuṇṇaṃ* = 'your acceptance of the *ti-saraṇa* is now complete'. But the significance of this is lost almost on everybody. Nobody knows the meaning of this statement in Pali. A regular brief sermon on this subject which has to be educative is very much the need of the day.

The lay community must be convincingly told that they have none other than the trinity of the *ti-saraṇa* to go to in search of care and protection, whether in prosperity or in adversity. With this conviction, one does not need to go kneeling at the feet of inferior brands of divinities [*avīta-rāga avīta-dosa avīta-moha* = not freed of greed, hatred and delusion] whose origins, quite often, lie outside Buddhism. This is what the Buddha seriously criticized in the Dhajagga Sutta, about the *devas* being asked by Sakka to seek refuge under relatively inferior divinities of the heavenly worlds.

Having got his entry or admission into the religion, the Buddhist has now to embark upon his spiritual journey and not stagnate where he started, opening as it were as they usually do, bank accounts to spend holidays in the heavenly worlds. But this is what is always indicated by the officiating monks in their regular *pin-vākyas* with promises of *dev-minis-sepa*. The new convert has to know for himself the details with regard to procedure and priorities. These are freely available in the *dhamma*. But as the *dhamma* is presented to the laymen today with the heterogeneity of media in Sri Lanka and the utterly confusing diversity of preaching personnel, one might see in the *dhamma* a bewildering profusion, and even confusion. One has necessarily to learn to select the relevant portions, and not everything that is sent down the media, in their proper order of applicability.

The religious culture of Buddhism for the attainment of the aspired goal is named *sikkhā*. The word *sikkhā*, derived from the verb *sikkhati* means training, disciplining and developing. The three stages in their Nibbana-ward ascending order are *sīla* [moral goodness and religious virtue] at the basic ground level,

succeeded by *samādhi* or mind culture which leads therefrom to the highest level of *paññā* or perfected wisdom, resulting in total release. This unmistakable successive order in the Buddhist way to release is clearly indicated in the Janavasabha Sutta [DN.II.217] under a very convincing heading named *satta samādhi-parikkhārā* or seven associate requisites as follows: ... *sammā samādhissa sammā ñāṇaṃ pahoti sammā ñāṇassa sammā vimutti pahoti* = He who has correct *samādhi* generates correct wisdom and he who has correct wisdom generates correct release.

It is painful to note the massive blunder committed by Sri Lankan Buddhists of all grades, including even foreign monks and laymen, that the Noble Eightfold Path begins with *paññā*. Let it be known that the Path begins with *sammā diṭṭhi* which in its correct implication is none other than 'corrected vision about Buddhism', acquired through reliable information via another or *parato ghoso* and further developed through one's own personal investigation or *yoniso ca manasikāro*. We get this information from none other than Venerable Sariputta in the Mahāvedalla Sutta at [MN. I.294]

Yet other cleverer interpreters of Buddhism insist that the Path must begin with *sīla*, and therefore must begin with *sammā vācā*. These wiser ones prune off the first two items of *sammā diṭṭhi* and *sammā saṅkappo* and re-graft them on to the Path after *sammā samādhi*. Congratulations on the excellence of their misdirected surgery. Why not these self tutored pundits read at least a couple of reliable suttas in Pali and discover for themselves precise statements like *sammādiṭṭhi-pubbaṅgamā* = corrected vision always serves as a fore-runner at [MN. III. 74] about the Path and discover for themselves the vital role of *sammādiṭṭhi* as the harbinger to the Path. Let it be learnt with a reasonable degree of humility, we pray, that our texts clearly indicate that the Path as leading to liberation is limited in scope and ends at the eighth item of *samādhi*. Buddhist texts know that it needs two more items to make the perfected *arahant*, viz. *sammā ñāṇa* or wisdom as no. 9 and *sammā vimutti* or release as no. 10. Ten

items make the *arahant: dasahi aṅgehi samannāgato arahā'ti vuccati* [MN.III.76].

Moral goodness or *sīla*, as far as the Buddhist layman is concerned, primarily shows an interest in the behavior of the human and his man to man relationships in this world. Even a cursory glance at the Buddhist ethics of *Pañca-sīla* with which the religiously good life of the layman begins and a brief study of the notions of moral goodness emerging in the world today would reveal how the ideas of the *Pañca-sīla* which were delivered to mankind two and a half millennia ago have a remarkable relevance today. We would even say a relevance, more than ever before. As far as we are aware, a greater part of the English speaking world, from Australia to the U.S.A. and an equally vast segment of the Christian world are now beginning to think or re-think in terms of these ancient human values which are vitally needed for peace on earth and goodwill among men.

Let us begin with this basic *Pañca-sīla* as propounded in the teachings of early Theravada Buddhism. An ancient rhyme ascribed to a young servant girl, Puṇṇikā by name [Thig. vv. 236-51] who goes to the river to fetch water in the cold season under the threats of her masters [*ayyānaṃ daṇḍa-bhaya-bhītā*] meets an old Brahmin who is seen plunging himself in the water in the hope of cleansing himself of his sins. He convincingly tells her that he does so in the hope of ridding himself of *dukkha* or suffering in life. Puṇṇikā is wiser than her years and perhaps in the company of wiser masters, had learnt of a different solution to this. Even today, her words are precise and convincing enough to educate us.

*Sace bhāyasi dukkhassa
sace te dukkham appiyaṃ
upehi Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ
Dhammaṃ Saṅghaṃ ca tādinaṃ.
Samādiyāhi sīlāni
Taṃ te atthāya hehiti.*

Thig. vv. 248-9

If you dread suffering and you like it not
To the Buddha, Dhamma and the Saṅgha
Thou shall go in search of a clue.
Thou shall also take upon thine own self
the wholesome training in moral goodness.
Bounteous rewards shall invariably be thine.

Translated by the author

These words of Puṇṇikā, we maintain, should be a convincing preamble to every Buddhist as he gets his *ti-saraṇa paṇsil* from his monk in the temple. The lay person should be made to know this in his own language before he asks for *ti-saraṇa paṇsil* and before the monk gives him his version in Pali. Little wonder that Puṇṇikā, with her own conviction and her deep penetrative wisdom, ended up as a distinguished Buddhist nun or *therī* in the *Sāsana*. In the first instance, *ti-saraṇa* implies the choice of a master and the pledge to follow his creed. This was Puṇṇikā's first advice to the aged Brahmin: *upehi Buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ Dhammaṃ Saṅghaṃ ca tādinaṃ*. With these words, one is securely held within a specific way of thinking, and that for a specific purpose.

We must not fail to mention here that those words of Puṇṇikā which mark a very early harmless act of conversion to the faith were preceded by her very logical and convincing words which insisted on moral goodness as a pre-requisite for *dukkha*-free comfortable living, both here and hereafter. Here are her words:

*Sace bhāyasi dukkhassa
sace te dukkham appiyaṃ
mā'kāsi pāpakaṃ kammaṃ
āvi vā yadī vā raho.
Sace ca pāpakaṃ kammaṃ
karissasi karosi vā
na te dukkhā pamuttyatthi*

upeccā'pi palāyato.

Thig. vv. 246-7

If you dread suffering and you like it not
commit no evil deed in the open or in secret.
If you do so now or in the future
You shall not be freed from suffering
even if you flee to a life beyond.

Translated by the author

This alliance of a devotee with the *ti-saraṇa* he takes upon himself has to be quite like an honest monogamous marriage, with one's loyalties and dedication to each other declared with sincerity and truthfulness. This comes out, at least in words, in many other rhymes our Buddhists chant, together with the monks, unquestionably in melodious sing song style, during prayer sessions at the temples. Note: *Natthi me saraṇaṃ aññaṃ Buddhho me... Dhammo me ... Saṅgho me saraṇaṃ varaṃ.*

Buddhists today, particularly the Sri Lankan ones, whether living at home in Sri Lanka or elsewhere abroad, have to question themselves as to whether they know the seriousness of the *ti-saraṇa* they take, sometimes even more than two or three times a day. Way-side prayers and supplications to alien divinities who are peripheral can in no way be accommodated and entertained within this *ti-saraṇa* pledge.

With this solid foundation of *ti-saraṇa* now laid for the grand edifice of Buddhism in which one hopes to dwell for the rest of one's life, [i.e. wanting to be a Buddhist by choice and conviction and not merely by being born as one] and also not be lamentably a Buddhist for death-bed comfort, one should look out for excellent building material, brick and cement that do not fall apart and wood work that does not rot and perish. That is why our Puṇṇikā, the little servant girl she was, pushed our aged Brahmin to take to a life of good moral living, *samādiyāhi*

sīlāni, as she correctly indicated to him. *Sīla* or moral goodness by itself brings happiness to humans on earth: *taṃ te atthāya hehiti*.

Here steps in our *Pañca-sīla* as the first stage in cultivating moral goodness in our day to day living. That is why our traditional accounts about the righteous Buddhist king or the Universal Monarch / *Rājā Cakavatti* provides, under his authority, legal sanction for the implementation of *pañca-sīla* rule everywhere. It would do well for political leaders, in countries where they pledge themselves to be Buddhist while fighting elections, to be instructed without ambiguity on this subject by their chosen chaplains. It must be clearly visualized that the Cakkavatti king insists that his provincial rulers or deputized agents of government, utilize his instructions in their own lands that there should be no destruction of life [*pāṇo na hantabbo*], or no dispossession of property of others [*adinnaṃ na ādāttaṃ*] etc. as forms of law enforcement. This applies to the entire range of the five precepts.

One is never sure how sensitive the Sri Lankan Buddhists are to the worth of *pañca-sīla* as an incomparable source of discipline, both social and religious. They gullibly believe that their taking the precepts, i.e. repeating what the monk utters makes them virtuous or *sīlavanta*. They are, in fact, made to believe so by the officiating monk who tells them that they have, by repeating the precepts after him, thereby become *sīlavat*. Far from it. The virtue of Buddhist *sīla* comes in being disciplined thereby. And making a success of one's life in this very existence, here and now. The failure to keep these perfectly well, and in their totality, it is clearly pointed out, shall bring about one's downfall here, in this life: *Idh'eva eso lokasmiṃ mūlaṃ khaṇati attano* [Dh 247].

The first precept *Pāṇātipātā veramaṇī*, with which *pañca-sīla* begins, in its larger perspective, expects one who is *pāṇātipātā paṭivirato* to abstain from contributing, directly or indirectly to the destruction of any living thing. In being so, one has to bring about a universal respect for all forms of life or *sabba-pāṇa-bhūta-hit'ānukampī* [DN.1.63], preventing the destruction of animal life for any use

of man, neither for food nor for the use of any other animal products like skins, furs and animal fats. At this stage, the Buddhists would do well to remember the truly comprehensive early Buddhist injunction about non-destruction of life in its totality without fragmenting it to slip out of it. This is the very first injunction of the *pañca-sīla* with which Buddhist morality begins. This is how the Dhammika Sutta of the Suttanipāta presents it:

*Pāṇaṃ na hane na ghātayeyya
Na cā'nujaññā hanataṃ paresaṃ.
Sabbesu bhūtesu nidhāya daṇḍaṃ*

Sn. v. 394

One shall not kill any living thing.
Nor get another to do so.
Not even approve any killing by others.
Having laid aside all weapons of destruction
With regard to all that have a life to live.

Translated by the author

Not even for propitiatory sacrifices to please the gods nor to seek the forgiveness of any whom they have angered. It is also not mere abstinence from eating meat on certain agreed days, merely not to incur the displeasure of one's favorite divinities and prophets, human or divine, whose good will they cringingly seek.

On the other hand, the English speaking world, including scientists and philosophers, now for more than twenty five years, is daily taking up the issue that respect for all forms of life in the world we live, i.e. the biota, has to be a must for the survival of man on this planet. The scientific community of the world is, more or less, in the forefront of this movement. The avowed theme sponsored by works like Biophilia Hypothesis is predominantly this. The plea for the survival of man on this planet, without being totally wiped out, is this unequivocally

declared respect for the entire ecosystem. In addition to this, a vast segment of the Christian world is now inclined to believe that God did not create the animal world to be killed and consumed by man as food.

In the teachings of the Buddha, there are no approved categories of meat or *kapa-mas* for the lay community. Whether the Buddhists, monks or lay persons, eat or not eat animal food is their choice. Make no mistake. Let them place themselves within the frame-work of Buddhist thinking and judge for themselves the compatibility of destroying any form of life for any reason with their primary aspirations. It is the Buddhist monks alone, who as *bhikkhus* or beggars, i.e. persons who beg for their food, are permitted to partake of any animal food offered to them [i.e. meat, fish or poultry], for the preparation of which the killing of any living thing was not known to, nor suspected by, nor ordered by the recipient.

On all sides, we seem to be converging on this single issue that it is the love of all things, both great and small, that shall be the passport to life in the world. More and more ingenious research is now being undertaken by people with vested interests of diverse sorts, to tamper with the so-called dividing line between life and no life. At what stage in the life of a human embryo have we humans a right to destroy it? Interested parties, like those responsible for the genesis of illegitimate and illegal children and those professionally dedicated to destroy them, are by no means qualified to sit in judgement over these issues. They had better be behind prison bars for the decent survival of mankind. No wonder that in many parts of the world, abortionists, even though cloaked and camouflaged, are ruthlessly put to death by segments of angry citizens. More than thirty forty years ago, well before some of the modern enthusiasts were born, philosopher scientists of the western world, with a great measure of sobriety, spoke of the right of the unborn to defend itself.

Strangely enough, that concept of 'love of all things' is the name by which our future Buddha who is to appear in the world next is introduced. He is

Maitreya or Metteyya, i.e. a derivative of the word *mettā* which means friendship [i.e. absence of enmity and hostility or *vyāpāda*]. The Buddha himself is seen clarifying this to his young son Rahula who was a monk at the time in these words in the Mahā Rāhlovāda Sutta: O Rahula, as one develops *mettā*, whatever ill will there is within, it disappears: *mettaṃ bhāvayato Rāhula yo vyāpādo so pahīyissati*. [MN.I.424]. In a world which is now capable of thinking with sanity in this manner, it is more than infantile to believe that God in heaven would, with incredible ethno-religious partialities, call upon any human on earth to wage war and annihilate another for the sake of establishing his own dominance in heaven above.

Item no. 2 of *Pañca-sīla* indicates the impropriety of dispossessing others of their legitimately earned possessions. This precept of abstinence from theft or *adinnādānā veramaṇī*, according to the tradition we have inherited, lays special emphasis on the legitimacy of acquisition of possessions, i.e. not censurable in society or punishable by law = *ananuvajjo adaṇḍāraho*. These are very valuable considerations for social solidarity and are found embedded amidst Indian religious ethics as in the Jain concept of *asteyaṃ* under their Four-fold Restraint or *cau-yāma-saṃvara*. It gives us great delight to detect this virtue being globally sponsored today, as far as we have seen, in countries like Australia, England, and America under the concept of Neighborhood Watch Area. The magnanimity and philanthropy of this ethic, we firmly maintain, contributes immensely to social coherence, irrespective of petty ethno-religious differences, on the basis of color, religion etc. even in large cities of the world.

It is too well known that the Buddha gave these ethics to the world two and a half millennia ago. As far as Buddhism in practice is concerned, this precept no. 2, quite like precept no. 1 about the practice of which we have already discussed above, and indicated that it is now more in the cold storage than in actual practice, raging slogans like have's and have-not's, have considerably assailed and shattered them in our Buddhist communities. Rob, steal and plunder have

nearly become excusable activities under modern concepts of poverty alleviation and economic redress. World powers are now seen setting the inexcusable example that invasions and wars, instead of peace, is the correct and the more efficient solution to world problems.

As no. 3 of the *Pañca-sīla* we now come to propriety of sexual behavior or *kāmesu micchācārā veramaṇī*, i.e. abstinence from sexual impropriety. We must begin by correcting here the recurrent blunder that is being made by hasty students of Buddhism, both Sri Lankan and foreign, who with their immature judgement, attempt to surreptitiously smuggle in the more exonerating rendering sensual in place of sexual for *kāmesu micchācārā* [See author's DHARMA, published by the Buddhist Cultural Centre, Nedimala, Dehiwela, 2006, *art.* Big Blunders in Dhamma Interpretation in Sri Lanka, pp. 87-93]. All authentic texts of Canonical origin justify, without any shade of doubt, only this meaning sexual, as against sensual.

We have already indicated above, with reference to precepts 1 and 2, the concern of *pañca-sīla* for human happiness and well-being as well as for social coherence. Propriety and decency in sexual behavior of humans would and should always be considered a vital ingredient for social harmony and robust growth of the human species. Anything to the contrary brings about decay and decadence of the human individual, both physical and mental, as well as the disintegration of the community to which he or she belongs. It is with these socio-cultural considerations in mind that Buddhist teachings are involved with propriety in sexual behavior of humans.

Buddhist teachings on this subject may appear to many, men as well as women, living here, there and everywhere, as being far too remote in point of time and far too alien in point of place. Be that what it may, a closer analysis of these should invariably reveal a gratifying sense of awareness on the part of the Buddhists of the evils resulting from a callous disregard of propriety in sexual behavior. This awareness pertains both to the perils that would consequentially

come upon the individual in terms of his health, wealth and reputation as well as of the calamitous breakdown of social relationships. These are being proved today as being globally relevant and applicable anywhere and everywhere. They may pertain, human health wise, to sexually transmitted diseases [s.t.d.], or social disaster wise, to lamentable divorces and separations in marriages. They also lead to criminally reprehensible crimes like abortions, necessitated by and resorted to in instances of sex outside marriage, pre-marital or extra-marital, resulting in UNWANTED CHILDREN who have to be gotten rid of.

Thus we see why Buddhism has, under its *pañca-sīla*, a special precept for sexual propriety [i.e. no. 3], reckoning under it the multiple wide-ranging complications of sexual impropriety or *kāmesu micchācārā*. As for sensual pleasures [the mistaken translation for *kāmesu micchācārā* of precept no. 3], Buddhism has an over-all carpet coverage which is introduced under the very second stage [i.e. *sammā saṅkappa* = attitudes or thought patterns] of the graduated way to Nirvana called the Noble Eightfold Path.

This particular item which we are highlighting here heads this list of attitudes. It is referred to as *nekkhamma saṅkappa* or the attitude of renouncing, not delighting in or letting go. We consider this very second stage of the Ariya Aṭṭhaṅgika Magga, viz. *sammā saṅkappa*, as the most vital ingredient in the life of a Buddhist. One cannot do without it. It initiates the movement of the human from the worldly or the mundane in the direction of the transcendental, i.e. from the *lokiya* to *lokuttara*. It is what germinates true Buddhist-ness in the human.

These *saṅkappa* are nothing but attitudinal changes in the head or heart of the human which bring about in the life of the new convert, corrected patterns of behavior with regard to his own life in the world [*nekkhamma saṅkappa*] as well as his relations with regard to others in the world, which are attitudes of love and non-hostility [*avyāpāda* or non-hostility and *avihimsā* or non-injury attitudes which are nos. 2 & 3 of the *saṅkappas*]. It is this correction of attitudes, i.e. turning them to *sammā saṅkappa* which enables a Buddhist to tread his path in life correctly.

This is how one gets one's speech, bodily activities and one's mode of making a living [*vācā kammanto ājīvo*] religiously justifiable. This correction, we feel, gets the Buddhist almost on to the launch pad level, ready to be fired off from there on his transcendental ascent to Nirvana.

We discover today traces of this renunciatory aspect of *nekkhamma saṅkappa* of Buddhism emerging in the new thinking of modern psychologists of the west like M. Scott Peck when they put forward concepts like 'delay gratification.' Free indulgence in gluttonous sensory gratification offered by the competitively commercialized world is not well thought of in the civilized world today. The vulgarity it quite often displays is deemed a blot on human culture. This sensibly calculated approach to the world as far as the stimuli offered is concerned, is looked upon as one of dignified restraint and detachment. It is by no means being ascetic. It is a product of judgemental approach to life. It is not austerity for its own sake. Keep this in mind all the time. This is the basic Buddhist culture which the first two items of *sammā diṭṭhi* and *sammā saṅkappa* of the Eightfold Path promulgate in the life of a Buddhist. Consider without further delay the need to re-visualize your vision of the Noble Eightfold Path.

Now we move over to honesty in speech or *musāvādā veramaṇī* as item no. 4 in our *Pañca-sīla*. Together with item no. 2 [*adinnādānā veramaṇī*] dealing with theft which we have discussed above, these two items of 2 and 4 cover the entire range of honesty and transparency in all social transactions. Violation of both these, whether at the top level of the State or the lower level of the individual in Society create serious social imbalances, depriving humans in our society of their legitimate rights, both material and less material. These misdeeds of stealing and lying in our midst deprive our own fellow beings of their birth rights to joy and happiness in life. These indeed are offences which need to be looked into at state level, offenders prosecuted and punished. But like parts of the human brain which, due to various reasons, get dysfunctional, and humans at times come to be totally incapacitated through Alzheimer and Parkinson's disease, so does law

enforcement too, at state level, turn out to be no more than a mere dead letter.

Finally, as item no. 5 of *Pañca-sīla* we come to *surameraya-majja-pamāda-tthānā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ*, i.e. the precept pertaining to abstinence from the use of intoxicants which lead to loss of judgement through drunkenness or *majja-pamāda-tthānā*. After two thousand five hundred years, the world has realized the menace of people driving motor vehicles under the influence of alcohol and they have now evolved a process of detecting and prosecuting offenders with the aid of breathalyzers. This now operates almost globally, irrespective of caste creed differences. At the time of promulgating this precept, the Buddha's main argument was that use of alcohol and consequent drunkenness lead to failure of judgement or *yaṃ pivitvā visaññī assa*. There are medically supported objections too, such as injury to brain cells. Sri Lankan Buddhists, the world over, women included, want to maintain that drinking in moderation would do no harm. They have said, let them say, what they say.

In presenting to the world the tradition of the Universal Monarch or Cakkavatti King, the Buddhists uphold the universal acceptability and applicability of the *pañca-sīla* code. To every provincial ruler who comes to him, pledging submission and seeking political guidance, the Cakkavatti King gives legal authority for the enforcement of the precepts of the *pañca-sīla* code which he propagates saying *pāṇo na hantabbo adinnaṃ na ādāttabbaṃ* etc. which literally mean 'No life should be destroyed, no one should be dispossessed of his possessions' etc. What is of utmost importance here is that in promoting moral goodness among the people of the land, no need is ever felt for overthrowing any forms of existing political parties or tumbling governments in power. This idea, expressed in Pali as *yathā bhuttañ ca bhujjatha*, i.e. 'continue to enjoy ruling as you did before' is hardly or never seen translated into Sinhala or English correctly. The very unambiguous meaning of the Pali is 'carry on the rule of the land as done before'.

In conclusion, let it be said that Buddhism is a religion which grew out of

human needs. The plight of man on earth was detected by a human, i.e. the Buddha aspirant Siddhartha. And through a sound system of logical analysis, he also discovered the situation to be solvable through human diligence, with human understanding and human application, without any appeal to an external agency or intermediary. The human must become aware of his own malady, that it is of his own seeking and creation. That there is no power besides the human who sits in judgement over him or who can promise to redeem him. All religious thinking and acting of the Buddhist must come within this framework of thinking.

Centuries have rolled on since the demise of the Buddha nearly two and a half millennia ago. Ever since, both in India and elsewhere, the emphasis on self-help of early Buddhism is seen moving over to the concept assistance of an external power. This drift towards the saving grace of an external power, is made to look undoubtedly superior to the human. Being presented under a glowing mantle of magnanimity, it can appear to be competitively a great attraction. This in every way is comparable to price cuts during sale time in the shopping mall. Pay less and buy more, even in the realm of religion. One has to remember that Buddhism moves in the opposite direction of buying less, with its thinking directed towards *nekkhamma sarīkappa* or renunciatory thinking. This agrees very much with the current 'delay gratification' concept of modern psychologists of the western world. This is also totally in consonance with the early Buddhist attitude of desisting or moving away from morally unacceptable social behavior, with the words *veramaṇī sikkhā-padaṃ* of the *pañca-sīla* which every Buddhist repeats after his monk master, possibly several times a day.

We leave you for the present with this vibrantly reformatory concept of attitudinal changes in the life of a Buddhist, which must definitely begin at stage no. 2, i.e. *sammā sarīkappa* of the Eight-fold Path. With a reasonable degree of self-awareness, every Buddhist has necessarily to initiate this character change which is vitally essential in our journeying in the direction of Nirvana. This is where one gets into the regulated right pattern of thinking as a human. This triple

group of *sarīkappa* or thought-reconstituting consists of

- i. *nekkhamma* or renunciatory attitude in life,
- ii. *avyāpāda* or non-hostile attitude and
- iii. *avihiṃsā* or non-injury attitude in life.

Anything less, by new world standards that are being set today, is virtually being sub-human and by Buddhist standards, being totally un-Nirvanic. It is now time for every one of us to think what the Noble Eightfold Path has to be in the life of a Buddhist. It corrects not only the life one lives in this world here, but infallibly guarantees one's ascent to the Nirvanic peak.